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Second Manassas: An Operational Dynamics Perspective

by

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## ABSTRACT

**SECOND MANASSAS: AN OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS PERSPECTIVE**, by Major Kent Thomas, U.S. Army. 37 pages.

The concept of winning wars when outnumbered is critical to United States doctrine in the 1980s and 1990s. As the product of domestic and allied force structuring, our most dangerous enemy has developed a clear cut superiority in mass. That disadvantage does not however, relieve planners of the responsibility for developing plans that propose ways of defeating our larger enemy. This study examines the elements of operational dynamics in light of their use as tools in the development of such a plan.

The vehicle for this examination is the Second Manassas Campaign of the American Civil War. During that campaign, Robert E. Lee's use of the elements of what we now term operational dynamics enabled him to transition from operational defense to offense, move smoothly from interior lines of operation to exterior lines, and defeat a numerically superior force. This analysis demonstrates the utility of operational dynamics in achieving such results.

*Keywords: military command, military strategy, (see)*

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## INTRODUCTION

The late 1980's are a time of great uncertainty. The United States faces an enemy that possesses tremendous military mass and power. That enemy's experience and history have shown the advantage that mass brings to prolonged war. Having endured the blitzkrieg of Nazi Germany and defeated it by trading time and space until sufficient mass could be achieved, the Soviet Union developed a doctrine that relies on such mass to win future wars. With an armed force that is significantly smaller than that of the Soviet Union, the United States must come to terms with that doctrine if we are to counter it effectively.

The United States Army finds itself in an interesting position when considering how to counter the Soviet Army's mass. Our experiences since the turn of the century would suggest that Soviet doctrine is correct. After all, we used much the same doctrine to win the Second World War. Unfortunately, we and our allies no longer possess such mass, nor do we have the buffers of time and space to build mass should war begin.

Since World War II, we have come to rely instead on technology as a means of narrowing the gap between our smaller forces and the Soviet Union's larger one. Technology is an elusive anchor upon which to base one's doctrine however. It is always shifting and changing. Today's advantage is surpassed by tomorrow's discovery. It is also extremely costly and not always proven in battle to provide the superiority it promises in theory. Although we believe the equipment will accrue us the advantage it promises, we cannot be sure that it will.

Moreover, if we continue to rely on technology alone to achieve an advantage, we face discouraging odds. The Soviet Union and its surrogates have made tremendous strides in weapons modernization during the last decade. Their front line forces possess equipment that is often equal to or better than that fielded by the United States and its allies.

Fortunately, there are other aspects of war fighting. All other things being equal, it is true that mass will triumph in war, but all other things are never equal. War by its nature is a fluid, changing environment. Its very violence and destruction ensure that rational decision making does not always dominate. Great battle captains have evidenced a grasp of that difference. They have all been able to find some element of warfare in their age that gave them a telling advantage over their enemy. Quite often, that advantage was largely one of the mind. While the tenets of agility, initiative, depth, and synchronization have all had their place in the writings of men such as Clausewitz, Napoleon, Rommel and Patton, it was their imaginative use that made them effective. It was not so much that the tenet itself was key, it was that the individual use of the tenet allowed the great battle captain to do what his enemy thought impossible.

FM 100-5 bases US doctrine on the same tenets.<sup>1</sup> What it seeks to provide however, is more than just a list of those tenets. Key to the doctrinal grasp of intent in AirLand battle is the concept of synergism. While a mastery of any one tenet benefits the force, it does not give the user the advantage that the synergistic use of some or all of the tenets does. It is that synergism that leads to significant advantage on the battlefield.

Although most immediately associated with the tactical fight, these tenets also have excellent applicability at the operational level of war. Mastery of the



advantage they lend will not, in itself, win campaigns however. They must be applied at the right moment and in the correct proportion and strength if they are to contribute to the winning of battles, campaigns, and wars. At higher levels of war, operational design must be meshed with a mastery of the tenets of war if decisive victory is to be achieved.

This paper presents an argument for campaign planning based on something more than mass or technological advantage. It will demonstrate that while either or both of those elements are advantages at the operational level of war, neither is decisive if the two opposing forces are even roughly comparable in ability.

It will also demonstrate the dominance of leadership in the determination of operational warfare; that superior leaders train superior armies capable of defeating technologically advanced and physically larger enemies. Moreover, it will show that superior leadership better grasps operational design and employs it to better advantage. Finally, it will demonstrate that the U.S. Army must come to terms with operational design and cease focusing on the primacy of technology as a panacea for future warfighting.

Important to the analysis are two assumptions. The first is that lessons can be learned from historical analysis. The second is that such lessons transcend history and technological change.

The framework for analysis in this paper is operational design. To that end, operational design will be looked upon as consisting of five elements: intelligence, maneuver, sustainment, deception, and leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Intelligence is vital to operational design. While tactical leaders can react in a timely manner to shifts in the battle because they immediately control the

response elements, operational leaders must determine force dispositions and lines of operation far in advance. Because operational commanders seek to influence events at the very limits of their span of control, major elements are usually difficult to reallocate once initial dispositions have been made. Reserves, once positioned, cannot be easily shifted across the front because of both time and space problems and interference with logistic support of forward units.

In addition, operational intelligence is both more critical than tactical intelligence, and harder to acquire. Once acquired moreover, reliance upon it involves greater risk because it must project situations so far in advance. An enemy exercising flexibility can destroy the assumptions and subsequent estimates of operational intelligence, placing the friendly force at greater risk than had it obtained no information at all.

Operational intelligence is also extremely vulnerable to enemy deception. If used properly however, it can accrue great advantage. Its greatest advantage can be obtained when fighting an enemy led by rigidly constricted thinkers, men who can be predicted to react in a similar manner time and time again. If operational intelligence can successfully probe the mind of the enemy leader, it can determine his most likely action. Operational level preparation can then be made to meet and defeat his efforts. The better the operational commander can see the battlefield through his opponent's eyes, the better he can forecast his own operational plans.

Operational maneuver is used to create a decisive disadvantage for the enemy. Although it is commonly thought of as involving movement of large forces over great distances, scale alone is not its sole determinant. Rather,

forces maneuver to secure an advantage that can be exploited tactically. The tactical success then leads to operational advantage which, in turn, can lead to strategic victory.

Sustainment plays an even larger role at the operational level than at the tactical level. Because operational design seeks to stretch effort beyond that expected of tactical warfighting, it often involves greater expenditure of resources, or if not, greater acceptance of risk from a sustainment point of view. Since operational design also focuses combat power at relatively distant points in time and space, sustainment must be planned far in advance.

Once theater operations begin, it is difficult to change basic sustainment arrangements. Supply efforts require time and resources to develop. They are generally immobile in comparison to the maneuver forces. Displacement requires advance notice and open lines of communication to implement in a timely manner. Even under the best of circumstances, displacement severely degrades the sustainment base's capability to support maneuver forces. Because the extension of the available force is characteristically greater at the operational level, failure to plan correctly has greater adverse impact.

Sustainment, therefore, can be a critically limiting factor in operational design. Overestimation of need will unnecessarily slow operations, and underestimation can bring about their premature end. Accurate calculation of support necessary to maintain the desired tempo of action becomes a key element in the planning process.

The sustainment planner must also be able to advise the operational planner concerning the viability of courses of action from more than just a gross estimate of capability. He has to ask himself whether delay to build sustainment

stockages will, in fact, provide greater sustainment depth, or if usage will outpace buildup? If stockages will improve with time, is the advantage worth the wait? Conversely, if stockages are not expected to improve should action be initiated early, even if the forces are not positioned as well as they might be at a later date? Finally, the sustainment planner must look at the enemy's sustainment situation. Is it better to attack him sooner or later? Does action now, limited by friendly shortages secure greater advantage because the enemy is in even worse shape, or will waiting place the enemy in a weaker position? The sustainment planner's task is extremely difficult. The parameters within which he must decide are almost always vague, and are usually subject to being overruled by the maneuver planner.

Operational deception targets the enemy's perceptions and expectations. If these can be manipulated, an advantage can be obtained. Operational deception's target depends on the structure of the enemy force. Ideally, it is targeted at the appropriate level of enemy command to ensure success, but must often be plausible at several levels of enemy leadership to be effective. The actual target may depend more on the character of the enemy commander and his relationship with his superiors and subordinates than on his doctrinal template, but in reality, such precise targeting is extremely difficult to identify, much less achieve.

Operational deception must also be timely. In theater operations this entails long lead times. It must be sequenced to support the deception story, and often must deceive friendly elements as well as the enemy. Friendly units aware of a plan may behave differently. If the difference is great enough to trigger enemy recognition, the plan could be jeopardized.

Finally, operational deception must be plausible, appropriate, and credible. To be plausible, it must be logical to the enemy. To be logical it must make sense to the right players, and often involves influencing leaders at varying levels of command. It will be most convincing when it conforms to the enemy's own expectations regarding future behavior. It must also be consistent. If a deception plan not only makes sense, but does so to the right people consistently, it is that much more believable.

Leadership is the element that binds all of the other elements of operational design together and creates the synergism necessary to gain from them as a whole more than would accrue simply from the sum of their parts. A number of skills must be mastered if the operational leader is to be successful. The operational leader must be able to develop and implement policies that create a positive command climate, one where diverse elements can find a place in the workings of the corporate whole. He must be able to mentor and develop subordinates. He must also be able to communicate effectively with co-equal leaders when no clear framework exists for such cooperation. Finally, he must understand where he fits into the plans of his superiors, and fill that position without detracting from the organization as a whole.

Given that framework, I have chosen to use the Second Manassas Campaign of the American Civil War as an example of the advantages operational design can provide a supposedly weaker force. Second Manassas not only exemplifies a campaign in which a smaller force worked its will on a larger, better equipped and better supplied force, but it also clearly gives evidence of mental agility and operational design as key elements in operational warfare.

## HISTORIC OVERVIEW

In August 1862, the war between the states was over a year old. While actions to date had been inconclusive, the Confederacy was at a distinct disadvantage in terms of manpower. With one-third fewer people than the North, the South could field an army of only 300,000 while the North could field 500,000.<sup>3</sup> The North also had control of the seas, an advantage that would eventually strangle southern overseas trade, denying the South support that was critical to its economic survival.

To make matters worse, the North controlled four key border states: Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Control of Delaware and Maryland ensured the security of Washington, D.C., and denied the South the resources of those states, both in terms of economic support and manpower. Control of Kentucky and Missouri ensured the safety of the Union rail network running through the Ohio Valley, and laid open a route into the Mississippi River Valley, a route that would eventually be used to split the Confederacy.

This meant two things from a strategic point of view. Without the additional resources of the border states, the South had to wage a war of shorter duration. From a Clausewitzian perspective, the Confederacy would reach its culminating point before it could defeat the Union unless it could secure the resources of the border states. Similarly, if the South were divided by Union action in the Mississippi Valley, it would be unable to move reinforcements and supplies within its borders. Such a restriction would further hasten the defeat of the Confederacy.

George McClellan's Army of the Potomac had been threatening the Confederate capital in Richmond since early in 1862. Despite a distinct advantage in strength however, he had not mounted a concerted attack on the Confederate defenders dug in around the city. His reluctance to attack stemmed from several reasons. By nature, George McClellan was an indecisive man. Unable to make up his mind about what to do with Richmond, he chose to do nothing. His indecision was aided however by Confederate efforts. A brilliant diversion by Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley had paralyzed not only McClellan, but the decision makers in Washington as well.

Moving quickly up and down the valley, Jackson had presented what the politicians in Washington viewed as a threat to the security of the city. Units originally earmarked to reinforce McClellan on the peninsula had been withheld to deal with Jackson. Through a series of feints and rapid movements Jackson drew his enemy in, caused them to divide their forces, defeated two of the pursuers in detail, then fled before the larger of the forces could find him. By the time the Union forces had recovered, Jackson had taken advantage of the South's interior lines of communication and had joined Lee in the defense of Richmond.

Finally, McClellan was deceived by his own intelligence service. Having placed his faith in the information provided by the Pinkerton Agency, McClellan continued to believe their highly inflated reports long after others realized they had to be in error.

The inference that the Confederate leadership drew from the same situation was somewhat different. As long as McClellan was the only threat,

things were not too bad. By early summer however, it had become clear that the situation was changing. In June, John Pope was brought from his victorious western command and placed in command of a newly created Army of Virginia.

Lee realized that further inaction on his part would result in his having to face threats on two fronts instead of just one. The combination of the two threats might very well overwhelm his defending forces. His only hope was the defeat of each force in turn.

As a result, in late June, Lee initiated a series of attacks against McClellan's army. In what has come to be known as the Seven Days Battles, he successfully turned McClellan away from the gates of Richmond, and destroyed McClellan's credibility as a battlefield general in the eyes of many Washington politicians.

While it was a great moral victory for the South though, the series of battles showed the need for a quick decision in the war. The Confederacy lost 20,000 men in the battles while the Union lost 16,000.<sup>4</sup> At that rate, the South would lose the war even if it won every battle, since the Union would still have forces after the Confederacy was exhausted.

This serves as a good example of the constraints sustainment can place on operational planning. If inadequate manpower existed for a prolonged war, the war must perforce be a short one if the Confederate commander wished to win. Such restraint had to be considered by Lee throughout his tenure as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The Lincoln administration, already frustrated with McClellan's procrastination, viewed the Seven Days Battles as a disaster. Interestingly enough, they failed to understand that they had hurt the Confederacy more in



losing the battle than they had in all the months of waiting for McClellan to act. Their intelligence continued to be poor and did not adequately portray Southern strengths. As a result, a potential advantage of striking and continuing to bleed the Confederate forces was lost. Instead, morale in Washington plummeted. Enlistment, which had been halted in anticipation of McClellan's seizure of Richmond and the subsequent fall of the Confederate government, was begun again, and work redoubled on fortification around Washington.

### THE CAMPAIGN

By July of 1862 then, the Union was dispirited and the Confederacy elated. Having seized the initiative, Lee was determined to take advantage of it. If he could conduct a successful campaign to establish a base in northern Virginia, he believed he could launch into Maryland, where he thought strong support for the southern cause might bring both financial support and numbers to fill his depleted ranks.

Occupation of northern Virginia would have the additional advantage of placing the Union capital at risk, forcing the concentration of Federal forces for its defense.<sup>5</sup> Such a concentration would serve to lessen the numbers facing Lee in any given battle.

Thus, what would become the Second Manassas campaign began as an effort by an army possessing superior intelligence, organization, speed, mobility, and deception, to defeat a larger and better equipped army before that opponent could bring its mass and seemingly bottomless sustainment base to bear.

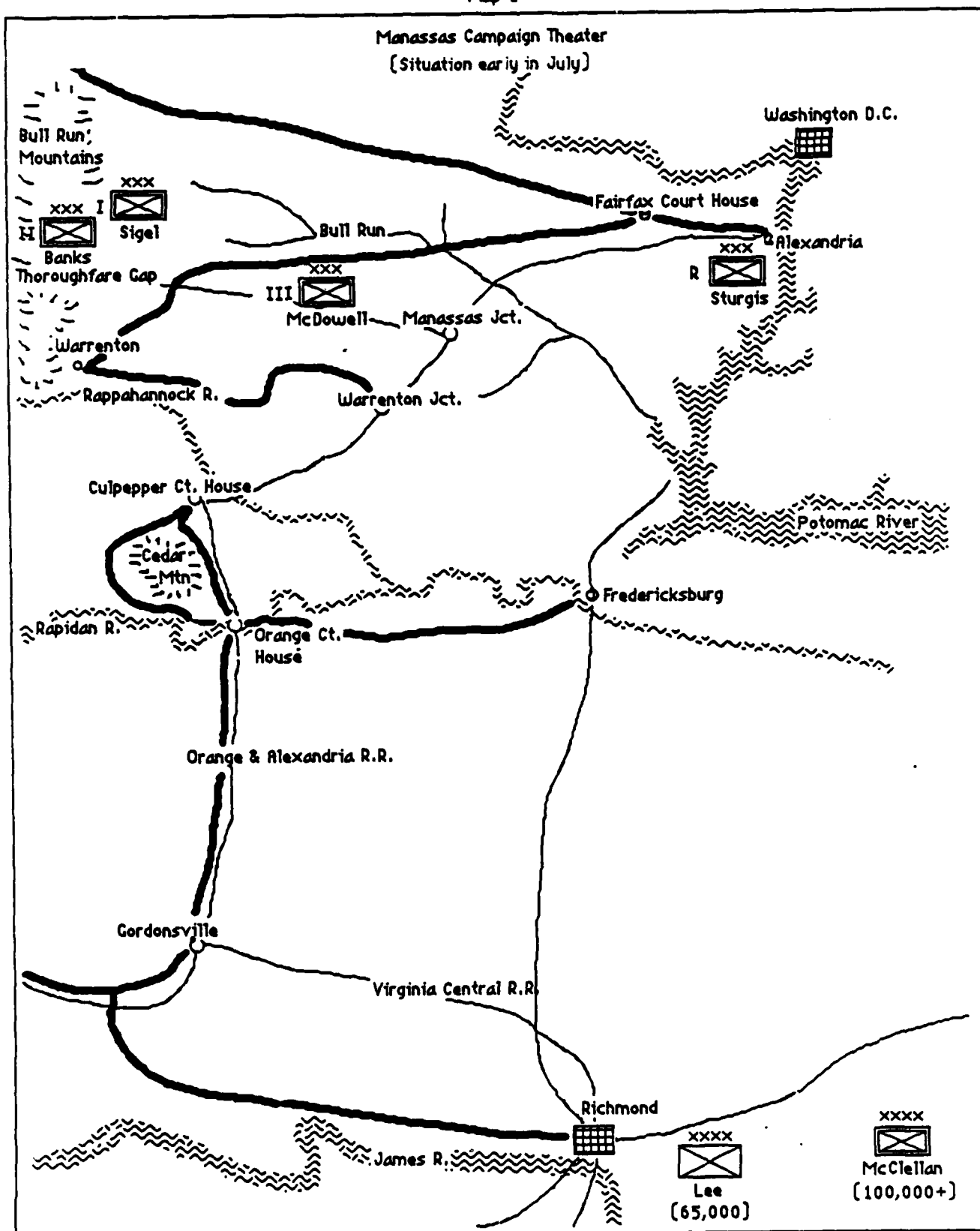
In July 1862, Pope's army was concentrated near Washington, D.C., with a mission of guarding the city, securing the Shenandoah Valley, and supporting McClellan's effort by striking Confederate lines of communication in northern Virginia.<sup>6</sup> To accomplish this task, he had concentrated his forces along the upper Rappahannock River (see Map 1). With a strength of over 43,000 men,<sup>7</sup> Pope planned to move some of his forces into the Shenandoah Valley and use the others to block possible counter attacks by Confederate forces from Richmond.<sup>8</sup>

During this period, Pope's moves were generally cautious, but from the Southern point of view, clearly threatened supply lines between Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley. Since the Shenandoah Valley was the breadbasket of northern Virginia and the primary sustainment base for Richmond, such a threat could not be ignored.

Also during July, Henry Halleck arrived in Washington to assume duties as the general in chief of the Union armies. Like Pope, he came from the west with a reputation of achievement and victory. Also like Pope, that reputation would quickly evaporate. Nevertheless, during the early summer of 1862, Halleck had tremendous influence on war planning in Washington.

McClellan bitterly resented Halleck's arrival. Just months before, McClellan had commanded not only the Army of the Potomac, but elements of what was now Pope's Army of Virginia, and had also held Halleck's job. His own lack of success and the usurpation of power that Pope and Halleck represented were especially galling to McClellan. As a result, he became even more defensive of past actions and reluctant to act. Since even at his best he

Map 1



did very little on the battlefield, greater intransigence meant that he actively resisted any effort to prod his army into action against Lee in front of Richmond.

Soon after his arrival in Washington, Halleck went to McClellan's headquarters in Virginia to discuss further action by the Army of the Potomac. McClellan, who had been misled by intelligence reports provided to him, refused to attack unless given an additional 30,000 men.<sup>9</sup>

The action provides an interesting sidelight on the importance intelligence can have on operational design. Throughout his campaign in Virginia, McClellan had been the victim of inaccurate intelligence estimates of Confederate strength.<sup>10</sup> With an army of over 100,000 men, he had been effectively held by first Johnston and then Lee, whose forces hovered around 65,000 at best. He was held because he firmly believed the intelligence reports supplied by the Pinkerton Agency, listing Confederate strength at 115,000.<sup>11</sup> Had he possessed reliable intelligence, the peninsula campaign might have had a different outcome.

With McClellan refusing to attack unless strongly reinforced, Halleck faced a dilemma. His political masters in Washington were unwilling to release more soldiers to McClellan. Doing so would leave the city vulnerable to a threat similar to that posed by Jackson only months earlier. Moreover, McClellan had done nothing of substance since beginning his campaign. There was little evidence to support the belief that 30,000 more troops would cause him to act.

Consequently, Halleck elected to bring McClellan back to Washington, consolidate his army with Pope's, then move south on Richmond. He communicated his decision to McClellan on 3 August.<sup>12</sup> Although the plan was

not revolutionary nor especially brilliant, it did provide for control of the forces, an element Halleck lacked as long as McClellan remained on the peninsula.

The action also says something about the leadership of the Union army at this point in the war. Unable to get McClellan to do what he wished, Halleck was forced to pull him back to a position where he could gain control of his actions.<sup>13</sup> McClellan's political support in Washington precluded Halleck relieving him, and at any rate, there was no one else to replace him with. Having to take such drastic action however, denied Halleck much of the operational flexibility he might have obtained had he been able to divide his superior forces and descend on Richmond with a double envelopment.

Halleck and the Union had the advantage of sustainment even though operating on exterior lines of communication. Had he been able to get McClellan and Pope to cooperate and move against Richmond at the same time along converging axes, he could have placed Lee in jeopardy. Had McClellan attacked Richmond, Lee would have been forced to defend it. If, at the same time, Pope had moved south, Richmond's supply line from the Shenandoah Valley would have been severed. Lee did not have the forces to defend on both fronts at the same time. Denied Richmond, the South might well have collapsed. Denied supplies, the Army of Northern Virginia would probably have ceased to exist as a viable fighting force. The lack of even this one element of operational design thus had a major impact on the war.

Despite having been ordered to begin his movement toward Washington, McClellan dragged his feet and delayed action as long as possible. Pope meanwhile, took action that would have far reaching impact. First, he issued a series of general orders designed, in his mind, to deter hostile activity behind

Union lines in Virginia. Those orders included the non-toleration of guerilla warfare, a mandatory oath of allegiance to the Union, and permission for Union commanders to confiscate needed forage and animals. Guerillas and anyone aiding them would be shot when captured, and those refusing to take the oath would be relocated. If those who had been relocated chose to return, they would be shot too. The orders resulted in wholesale pillage and looting of defenseless civilians followed by outrage in the South. That was not what Pope had intended, but it was what happened.

The action spurred Lee to immediate action too, not what Halleck wanted at all.<sup>14</sup> Halleck wanted time to consolidate his forces, not attacks on them while they were dispersed. The incident serves as a good example of operational leaders operating out of concert with each other, and as a result doing more harm to the cause than good:

Pope's second mistake was the issuance of what he meant to be an exhortation to his army to fight bravely.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the wording came across as both insulting and demeaning to the very forces he was attempting to exhort. The result in this case was a demoralized army that hated its commander. Having just enraged and enervated his enemy, it was not a good move for Pope to have taken.

Lee used this time of northern confusion and reorganization to resupply, organize, and prepare his army for action. As early as 12 July it was apparent he would have to take some kind of action against Pope. By that date, Lee's intelligence had detected movement of Pope's forces to Culpepper. In that position, Pope was within thirty miles of Gordonsville, the northern point of the

Virginia Central Railroad, the critical supply line between the Shenandoah Valley and Richmond (See Map 2).

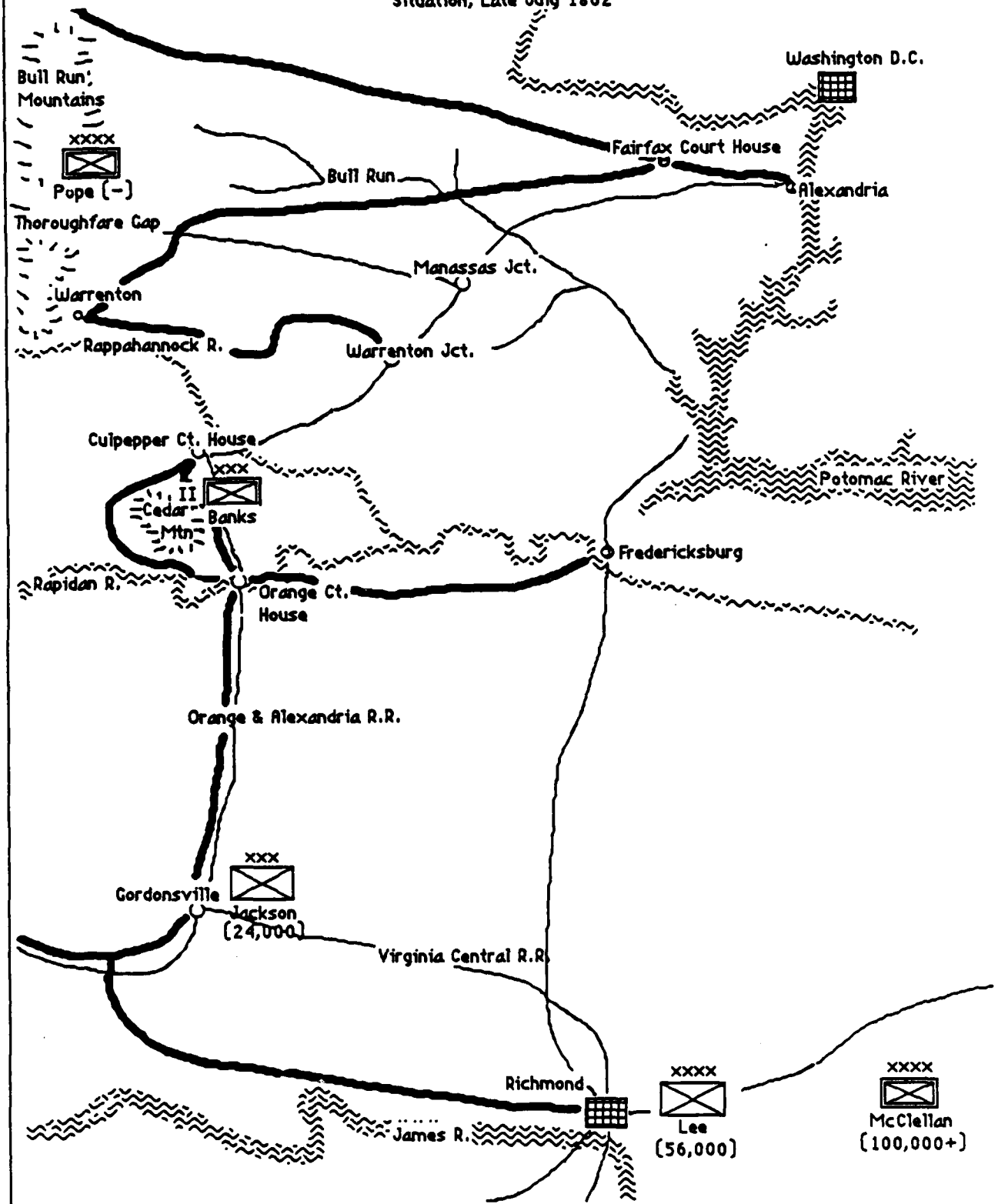
In actuality, Pope was only repositioning forces to prepare for McClellan's reinforcement, but there was no way to tell that early in July. Consequently, Lee ordered Jackson's corps north to Gordonsville to protect the rail line. The action was risky. Had the North learned that Lee had split his force, they could have fallen on each part of it in turn and destroyed it.

As it turned out, Union intelligence did not detect Jackson's movement and for two weeks things remained quiet. That time gave Jackson time to reposition and send his cavalry out to determine Union strength and intentions at Culpepper. He learned that the force at Culpepper was small and inactive. Lee's intelligence outside of Richmond also told him that McClellan was remaining inactive. Unless McClellan moved or Pope reinforced, Lee knew he had little to fear. The situation serves as a good example of understanding what level of enemy leadership to look at for overall intent. Had Lee looked at either Pope or Halleck he would have received a far different picture than he did by looking at the brigade in Culpepper and at McClellan's headquarters on the Peninsula.

The two week lull was broken by Pope's issue of the general orders concerning the treatment of civilians in Virginia. Coinciding with information indicating that McClellan would not attack, Pope's orders spurred Lee to react. Jackson was reinforced with A.P. Hill's light division, bringing Jackson's strength to 24,000 while Lee retained 56,000 men in the defense of Richmond.<sup>16</sup>

Map 2

Manassas Campaign Theater  
Situation, Late July 1862





The situation demonstrates the advantages resulting from good operational analysis and design. Lee and Jackson had operational intelligence that told them essentially what McClellan and Pope were up to.<sup>17</sup> It was not hard to obtain. Prior to any movement, both Union generals built up huge stockpiles. Preparation of those stockpiles meant something was about to happen. In an area where the populace supported the enemy, it was not difficult for cavalry patrols to learn of plans. What made it so effective was the absence of any similar effort on the part of the Union forces.

The situation also highlights the differences in command organization. By 1862, the Confederate Army had consolidated its cavalry at army level and was using it in a coordinated effort to obtain intelligence, raid the enemy's rear, and protect the flanks of the army while moving.<sup>18</sup> Lee had also organized his divisions into *ad hoc* corps under Jackson and Longstreet. This organization provided two readily apparent advantages. First of all, intelligence better met the needs of the operational commander because it was centrally directed. Secondly, *de facto* corps organization meant that maneuver forces with substantial hitting power could be independently employed, yet centrally coordinated to provide superior overall effectiveness.

The Union Army could not claim the same level of development. Cavalry was usually employed in penny packets, and while every bit as tactically proficient as the Confederate cavalry, the information it gained was poorly coordinated and could not be transmitted to the key decision makers in a timely manner. Consequently, Union intelligence collection and deception efforts were degraded. Without timely intelligence, operational commanders of Union forces were denied the time they needed to react to Confederate initiatives. The

problem was magnified because the Southern forces could tactically move more rapidly.

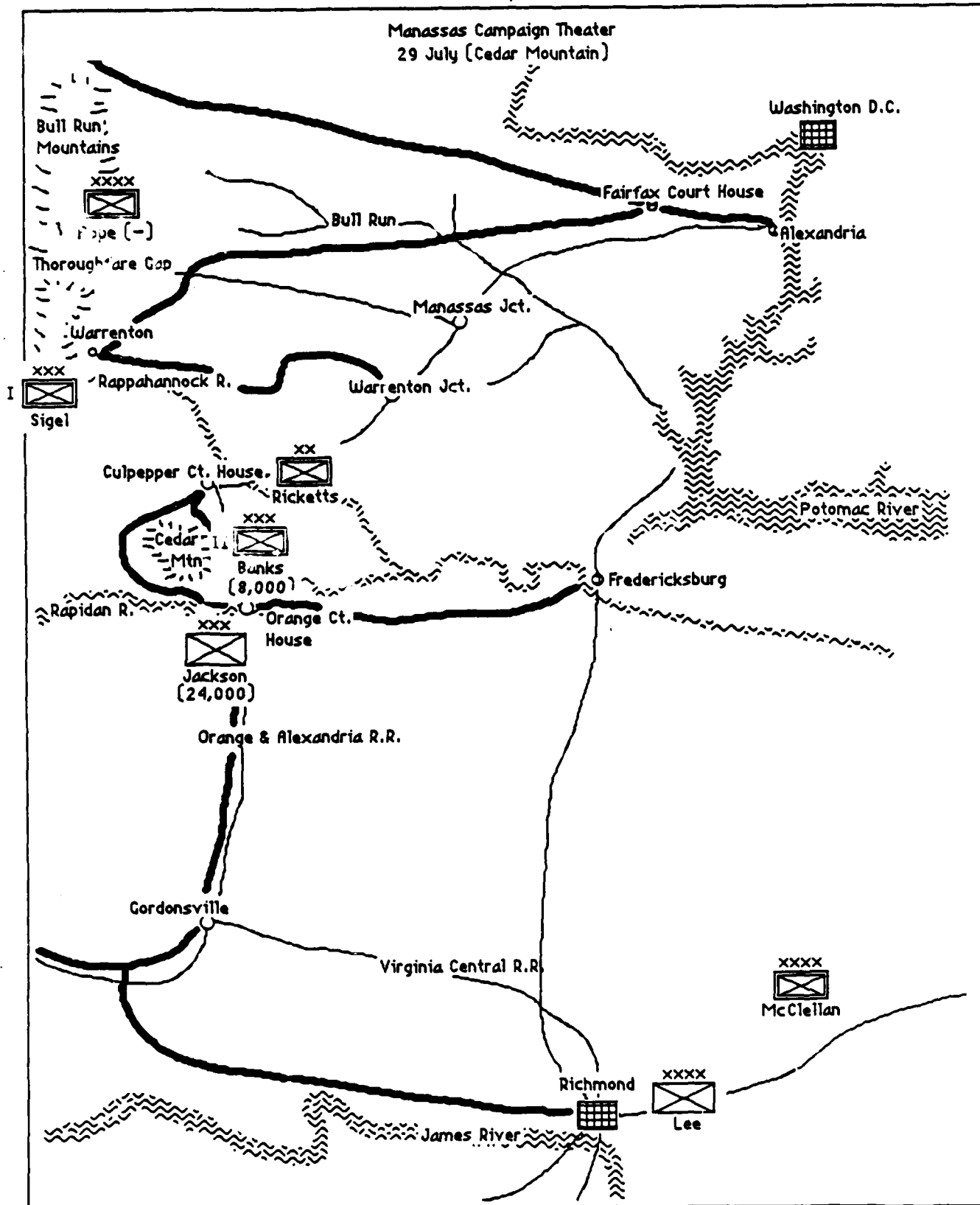
Corps command was equally weak. Prior to the peninsula campaign, McClellan had corps organization thrust upon him by President Lincoln. The corps commanders did not enjoy McClellan's trust, and were consequently not given important missions outside of McClellan's immediate span of control. Pope was no better at this, and Union efforts at the operational level suffered. The contrast between the Confederate and Union armies was marked, especially considering the commanders were the product of the same system.

That contrast was never more apparent than during the Second Manassas campaign. While Pope dawdled around northern Virginia waiting for McClellan to join him, Lee and Jackson prepared to move. When, early in July, Jackson's cavalry reported that union forces were converging on Culpepper, Jackson was provisioned and ready to move (See Map 3).

Jackson believed he could crush the extended leading elements of Pope's army with a swift movement before Pope could bring forces up to reinforce them. The plan capitalized on the superior training, conditioning and leadership of Jackson's soldiers, but was not beyond capabilities they had already demonstrated. Jackson intended to conduct a twenty mile march to Orange, attack the elements near Culpepper, destroy them, then escape before Pope could react.

Although such actions had worked in the Shenandoah Valley, they did not in this instance. Temperatures soared above 100 degrees and troop movement slowed to a crawl. Instead of pinning the Union forces and hitting them from the flank, Jackson ran headlong into them at Cedar Mountain. A

Map 3



pitched battle developed, with inconclusive results. One reason the results were inconclusive however was the failure of two other nearby Union forces to enter the fight. Jackson's 24,000 man corps had run into Banks' 8,000 man division. Just three miles to Banks' rear, Ricketts had another division, and to his rear was Sigel's corps. During the battle, both units could have come forward. Had they done so, Jackson might have been decisively engaged. The Union had lost a great opportunity to deal the South a severe blow.

The South's superior intelligence, deception, and leadership came into play again after Cedar Mountain. Pope was now aware of Jackson's presence. Jackson, in failing to crush the lead elements of Pope's army, was extremely vulnerable. Pope and Halleck however, were operating blind, and had almost directly opposing views of the situation.

Jackson fell back to the Rapidan River following the battle at Cedar Mountain. Pope assumed Jackson was leading only a raiding party, and wanted to pursue. Halleck intervened however, and prevented Pope's pursuit.<sup>19</sup> Had Pope been allowed to pursue, he might well have hit Jackson before he could establish a good defense, and could have destroyed Jackson's corps before Lee and Longstreet could arrive to reinforce it. Had that happened, history might well read differently.

It did not however, and Jackson was safe for the time being. Lee, having lost his first effort to achieve a quick victory, resolved to try once more before Halleck could concentrate his forces. On 13 August he ordered Longstreet north to Gordonsville with three divisions.

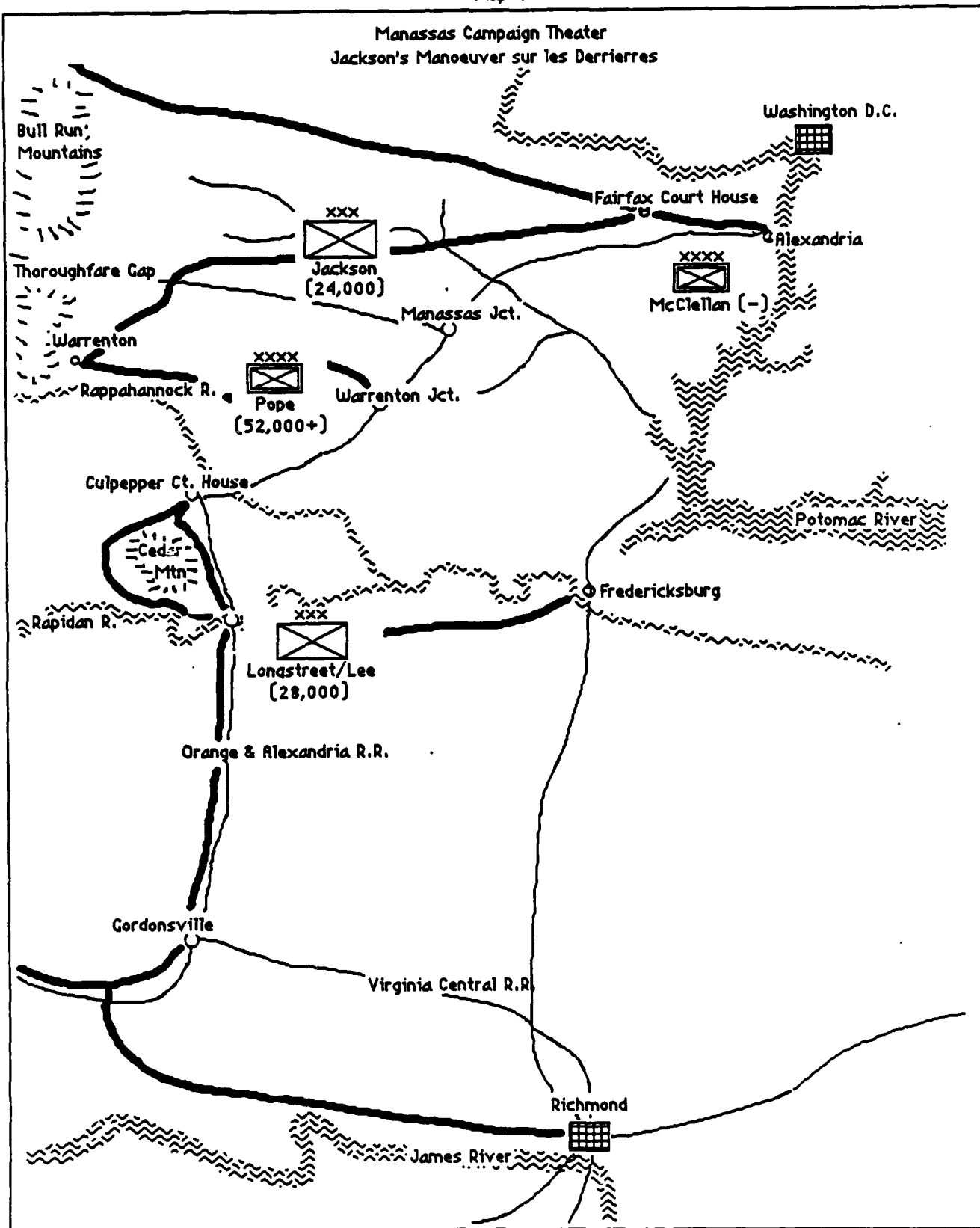
Although outnumbered, Lee was in a position any operational commander would enjoy. He had internal lines of communication, allowing him

to reinforce and supply his forces more rapidly than could his enemy. He had superior intelligence, so he knew where and what his enemy was about<sup>20</sup>, while the enemy stumbled about blindly. Whether planned or not, his deception plan was succeeding. Pope could not believe Lee would uncover Richmond, so he was unwilling to believe enemy forces were possible in the concentration that existed before him. Finally, Lee had an effective system of command and trusted his subordinates. It was possible therefore, to send them on missions outside his immediate span of control. Pope could not do the same.

Although neither side knew it, the race to Second Manassas had begun. By 15 August, Pope had been reinforced by Burnside's IX Corps, bringing his total strength to approximately 52,000.<sup>21</sup> His army was concentrated in a "V" formed by the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers. His supply lines stretched back to the northeast. It was an extremely vulnerable position, yet Pope was unconcerned because he saw no enemy force capable of engaging him.

Jackson and Lee were very much aware of Pope's vulnerability. Cavalry patrols told them that it might be possible to move undetected along Pope's flank, cross the Rappahannock, and strike Pope's rear while cavalry destroyed a key railroad bridge on Pope's supply line, thus cutting Pope off from Washington. Cut off from reinforcement, Pope would be open for destruction.<sup>22</sup> The plan disintegrated however, when Jackson's cavalry commander, J.E.B. Stuart, was surprised by union cavalry while bivouacking, and lost a copy of the operations plan. Pope, learning of his vulnerability and the presence of forces capable of defeating him, withdrew to more defensible positions before Jackson could attack.

Map 4



Pope's advantage was short lived. Just days later, Stuart mounted a cavalry raid against Pope's headquarters. In that raid he captured Pope's money chests, and papers that gave the Confederates a clear view of Pope's plans and strength. Those plans showed that McClellan's forces were moving and close to linkup with Pope's army.<sup>23</sup>

Lee resolved to create a situation whereby Pope would be drawn away from McClellan to a point where he could be defeated without Lee having to fight the added strength of McClellan's corps. Lee developed a masterful maneuver plan, one that, if it worked, would create a situation where tactical superiority could be employed to achieve operational victory.

In the plan, Longstreet would replace Jackson in the position along the Rapidan, thus keeping the Union forces confident they knew where Jackson was. Jackson would take his corps north, screened by the Bull Run Mountains. Once around Pope's flank, he would execute a classic *manoeuvre sur les derrieres*, and fall upon the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, cutting Pope's line of communication with Washington. When Pope responded, Jackson would withdraw to the west, pulling Pope with him. Once Jackson had Pope extended and separated from the possibility of reinforcement by McClellan's forces, Lee and Longstreet would fall upon his flank. The combined weight of the two Confederate corps would be used to defeat Pope.<sup>24</sup>

This time the plan succeeded. Jackson moved an amazing fifty-four miles in forty hours,<sup>25</sup> cut the Union supply line, and as a bonus, discovered Pope's supply depot at Manassas Junction (See Map 4). The quick movement had been made possible by Jackson having taken a calculated risk and left all of his trains except the ammunition and ambulance wagons behind with Lee.

To keep his troops as fresh as possible, he had also left their knapsacks behind. Finding the supply depot allowed Jackson to reprovision and re-equip from enemy stocks, bringing him back to full strength much sooner than even he had hoped.

The maneuver met all expectations. Jackson got to the rear of Pope's force, cut the link with Washington, was able to reprovision, and then escape, drawing Pope after him. Deceived by Longstreet's force on the Rapidan, Pope believed Jackson had only a small raiding party with him. Lacking an effective intelligence collection force, nothing was available to him that might indicate otherwise.

Jackson's movement exhibited the advantages one can obtain through speed, deception, and maneuver. It also demonstrated the importance of sustainment. The combination of Stuart's raid on Pope's headquarters and Jackson's seizure of the supply depot at Manassas Junction deprived Pope of his monetary reserves and supply base. While he could make the losses up, it took time. Lee on the other hand, had switched from interior to exterior lines of communication without initially being able to sustain himself for long. By seizing Pope's supplies, he gained the sustainment necessary to complete the defeat of Pope's army and move back onto interior lines of communication where he could supply more easily. It was a good example of risk taking that paid off handsomely.

Pope responded to Jackson's presence by turning his army west and pursuing. Since he believed Jackson had only a raiding force, he did not wait for further reinforcements to arrive from McClellan. That decision proved costly.



Having drawn Pope's attention, Jackson confused him by withdrawing from Manassas Junction along three different routes. The action came about because of confusion concerning Jackson's orders to his subordinates, but worked effectively against an enemy that lacked a centralized cavalry force to sort things out. It also survived Confederate confusion because the Southern commanders were used to independent action within the commander's intent, and thus were able to consolidate smoothly near Bull Run.

For several days, Jackson hid behind a convenient ridge line near Bull Run. Pope, continuing to believe that Jackson had only a raiding force with him, decided to wait for that force to break for home, as he believed it must eventually do. Accordingly, he positioned his forces to catch Jackson when he headed south. Meanwhile, Lee and Longstreet quietly withdrew from the Rapidan and moved north to reinforce Jackson. To keep the deception that they were still on the Rapidan plausible, they left some artillery in position and had it shell Union positions day after day.

Jackson waited until Lee and Longstreet were within supporting distance, then ventured out and hit one of Pope's divisions. Pope responded by bringing forces to bear against Jackson's position. The action and reaction accomplished two things. First of all, it drew Pope farther west, stretching his supply lines and further fragmenting his force. Secondly, it removed most of the Union forces from the area where Lee and Longstreet had to pass to reinforce Jackson, preserving the secret of their movement. Pope then compounded his disadvantage by bringing only part of his available force to bear, believing he faced only a small raiding party. The units he left in reserve never entered the battle, giving Lee yet another advantage.

The actual battle of Second Manassas lasted for three days. On the 28th and 29th of August, Pope located Jackson and assaulted his positions frontally. Although outnumbered two to one, Jackson was able to hold Pope off. While part of his success in the defense was due to good positioning, much more of it was the result of superior leadership and organization.

Pope's army lacked unity of command. Its attacks were fragmented and uncoordinated, allowing Jackson to focus first on one attack and then on another. As a matter of fact, Pope spent the better part of the 29th without the services of two of his corps. Partly because of a confusing order sent by Pope, and partly because of personal dislike for Pope combined with general lethargy, the corps commanded by Porter and McDowell wandered to the south of the battle field throughout the day.<sup>26</sup> Furious with their absence, Pope ordered them to move during the darkness of early morning on the 30th. His anger and the corps commanders' attitudes toward him certainly did little to reinforce an already weak command structure.

Jackson's organization, on the other hand, served him well. He was not bound to his headquarters. Unlike Pope, he could move to the decisive point in the fight and rally forces because other subordinates could be trusted to execute his intent. Jackson did not have to allot forces to cover his flank because his consolidated cavalry served as a flank guard. Finally, Jackson, like all corps commanders under Lee, had massed his artillery and had placed it on each flank aimed to provide cross fire to his immediate front. The fires were extremely effective in stopping Union assaults.

By the 29th of August, Lee and Longstreet had arrived and were linked with Jackson's flank. Pope, still unaware of their presence, and unwilling to

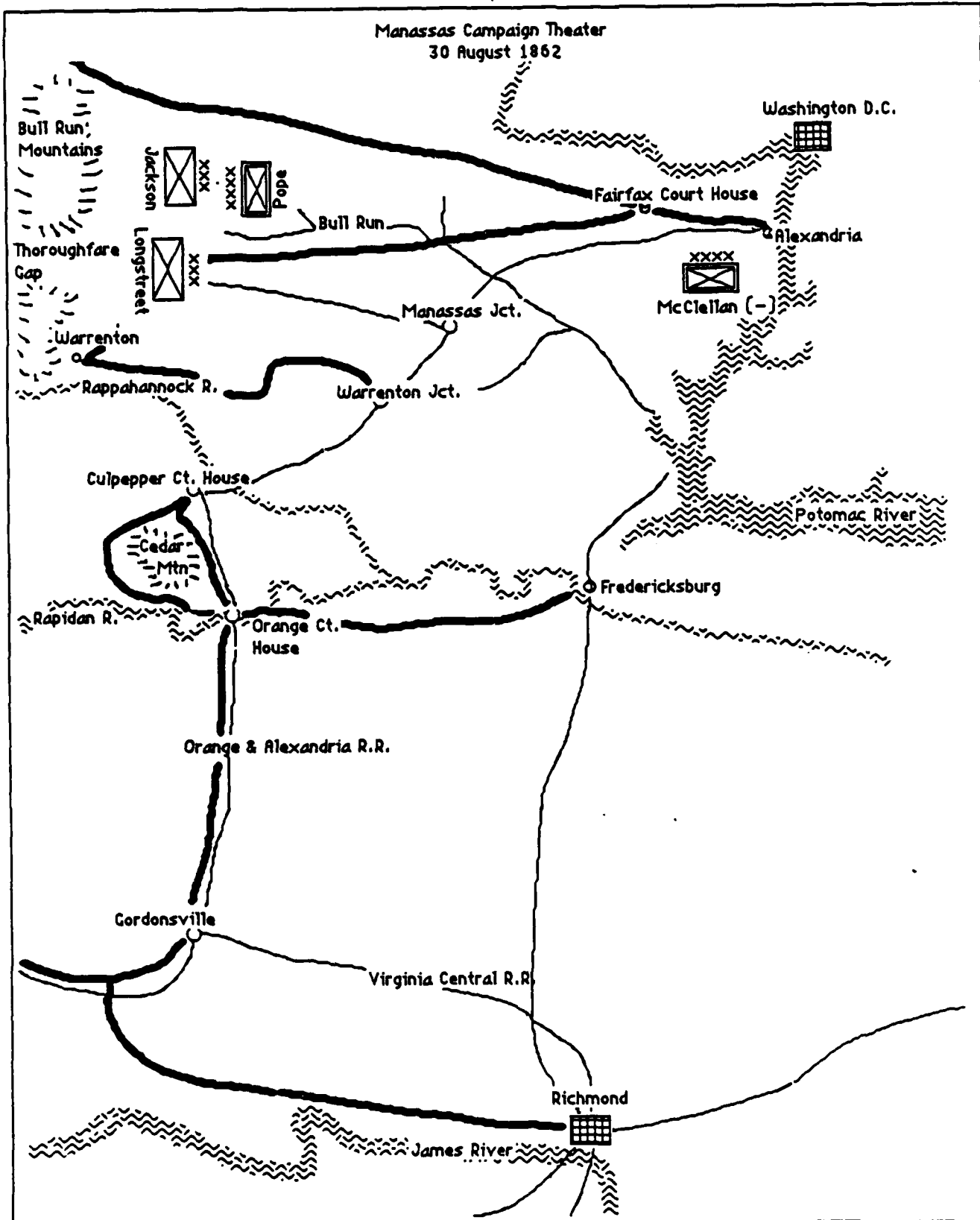
believe reports of large unit movements from the direction of Thoroughfare Gap, directed that a concentrated attack be initiated against Jackson on the 30th.<sup>27</sup> It had taken him several days to gain control of his subordinates, but on the 30th, he had finally gotten them close enough to him that he could control their actions. Pope believed he had reached the point where he finally had Jackson in a position where he could effectively flank him.<sup>28</sup> In reality, he had reached the climax of Lee's deception plan.

Pope's attack was doomed from the beginning. Union divisions forming for battle were bombarded by the massed Confederate artillery. When the initial assault faltered, Pope ordered additional forces from his left flank into the assault. As those units turned to move to the battle with Jackson, Longstreet struck.<sup>29</sup> He first added his own artillery to that already massed on Jackson's right flank. The combined fires of the two corps decimated a Union division. Then, the ground in front of his corps vacated, Longstreet struck into the void, rolling up Pope's left flank and striking Union divisions in the flank and rear as they prepared to attack (See Map 5). By nightfall, the battle was lost for Pope. On the 31st he began a full scale retreat toward Washington.

### CONCLUSION

The Second Manassas Campaign provides a unique example of operational design and its impact on planning and execution of large scale operations. Military theory suggests that the elements of operational design are applicable, and Second Manassas demonstrates how they were skillfully applied by the Confederacy. Despite being outnumbered and out equipped, the Army of

Map 5



Northern Virginia prepared and artfully executed the defeat of the Northern armies facing them in Virginia in the summer of 1862. The defeat was not decisive from a strategic point of view, but it reversed the momentum of the war at that point, and provided the Confederacy an opportunity to catch its breath. From what looked like inevitable defeat, the South had snatched a victory that placed its army quite literally at the gates of Washington, capable of striking a death blow to Northern hopes for an early end to the war.

The following conclusions regarding the applicability of operational design and its associated military theory appear to be reasonably supportable from the analysis of this campaign:

First, just as design theory proposes, intelligence was critical to the operation. Given superior intelligence, Lee was free to plan secure in the knowledge of Pope's next move. That advantage translated to a direct combat multiplier for Lee at the theater level. Pope in contrast, was operating almost blind. As Jackson and Longstreet moved north, Pope was continually forced to react. Without centralized cavalry to provide him a picture of the overall situation, he could seldom divine what his enemy was doing. While good fortune saved his advance guard at Cedar Mountain and again when he was over extended between the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers, his lack of adequate intelligence caught up with him at Manassas. Unaware of Lee's intent, he could not react quickly enough to move forces to avoid defeat. His forward forces were caught out of position by Longstreet's attack, and his reserve was too far to the rear to participate in the battle. Both of those forces were placed where they were because of Pope's intelligence information.

Maneuver was also proven to be a critical design element. Lee, Jackson and Longstreet were all able to make use of maneuver to take advantage of temporary weaknesses in Union positions. Because Confederate forces could march farther and faster than their Union opponents, they were able to secure tactical advantage over a numerically superior enemy. That tactical advantage was parlayed into operational victory and resulted in Pope's retreat to Washington on 31 August.

It is also interesting to note training's role as a combat multiplier. The Army of Northern Virginia was by most standards, an inferior force to the Union armies of Pope and McClellan. It was poorly equipped, poorly supplied, and poorly paid. It faced the best equipped and supplied army in American history.<sup>30</sup> Its advantage lay however, in its training. Trained to out perform its enemy, the Army of Northern Virginia did things that the Union army thought impossible. It proved to be a significant advantage.

Sustainment was shown to be important, but more so as a consideration prior to action than as a key element in the action. Aware of the risk that he took logistically, Jackson chose to leave most of his supply train behind and trade the dangers of supply exhaustion for speed and surprise. While not fully applicable to logistically heavy modern forces, Jackson's assumption of risk for an increase in speed should be remembered. In almost all cases, the commander willing to assume the greatest amount of logistic risk prudent with regard to the situation, accrues an advantage over his opponent. Modern commanders establishing supply points in the defense should also remember how much Jackson benefited from his enemy's supplies and plan their defense accordingly.

From a strategic point of view, sustainment had a major impact on the operation. Faced with the possibility of Pope severing the supply line to the Shenandoah Valley, Lee had to take action to protect it. Had Pope been a little more aware of the importance of that line, he might have positioned his forces differently.

Deception proved its importance time and again in this campaign. Using their superior intelligence, Lee and Jackson proved adept at identifying the perceptions and expectations of both Pope and McClellan. Given a good grasp of those, the Confederate leaders manipulated them to their advantage. With McClellan sulking on the peninsula, Lee was able to concentrate on Pope, confident that McClellan would not attack. Aware that Pope could not closely monitor his movements, Lee and Jackson were free to leave diversionary *elements in place while maneuvering* major forces to locations where Pope did not expect them.

The Confederate leaders also proved adept at targeting the correct level of Union leadership with their deception plan. During the battle at Second Manassas, Union division commanders saw and reported Longstreet's presence, but Pope refused to listen. What they reported was not plausible in his mind, so he stuck with what seemed to make the most sense. That deception proved to be key to his defeat.

It is leadership though that emerges as the most critical of the design elements. Weak and confused operational leadership was the single most identifiable weakness of the Union army in 1862. Part of the problem was undeniably political. Political arguments impacted on every major policy decision. The Democrats wanted amphibious attacks up the Virginia Peninsula

against Richmond, and the Republicans wanted to attack overland from Washington. Policy decisions changed as one party or another gained temporary ascendancy. During one such period, Lincoln forced corps organization on McClellan, and while he accepted the situation, neither he nor Pope used either the corps organization or their subordinate leaders effectively.

Politics was only one aspect of the problem however. Reporting procedures were awful. Commander's intent was seldom transmitted effectively, or understood when it was received. The Army of the Potomac and the Army of Virginia were never able to get their staffs to function as well as that of the Army of Northern Virginia. Matters were made worse because two of the benefits of corps organization, centralized cavalry and massed artillery, were never concentrated for more effective use.

The Union leadership apparently never understood the geometry of their position either. Union forces were on exterior lines of communication at the beginning of the campaign. To overcome the distance disadvantages of exterior lines, the commander must maintain continuous pressure on the enemy. If he relents, the force on interior lines can concentrate at specific points more quickly, and defeat the force on exterior lines in detail. In this campaign, McClellan relented, and Lee took advantage of that to strike at Pope.

Mutual support also came into play here. The force able to achieve and maintain mutual contact and support receives a bonus from the synergism that two or more forces working together can generate. Lee and Jackson understood that advantage, and strove to avoid decisive contact unless they were supported. The Union leadership seldom achieved mutual support, and were at a disadvantage as a result. It can even be argued that they chose to



ignore the advantage when it was within their grasp, as at both Cedar Mountain and Second Manassas.

The Union commanders did not personally do their cause much good either. Pope was overconfident and brash. He was mistrusted by his subordinates and hated by his soldiers. So certain was he of the efficacy of his own plan, that he failed to look at indications of what Lee was doing and was badly beaten. McClellan was sullen and too concerned about his own chances for political office after the war. He was never willing to subordinate personal fortune for the greater good. Moreover, even at his best, he was too cautious to ever achieve the dramatic results needed to defeat Jackson and Lee. Halleck was too tentative as a commander in chief. Old and tired, he was unable to think operationally. His plan never progressed beyond the decision to mass his forces. With no end state foreseen at his level, it was difficult for any of his subordinates to build campaign plans to support what he envisioned being accomplished.

Subordinate Union leaders were little better. Already politically divided, the mistrust engendered by factional disputes came to the fore at Second Manassas. Generals loyal to McClellan served Pope only reluctantly. When ordered into action, they dragged their feet, used every opportunity to interpret vague orders incorrectly, and even ignored orders.

In contrast, the Confederate army was blessed with great leaders from both a personal standpoint and operational design standpoint. They effectively used intelligence to locate and determine the intent of their opponents. Lee always seemed to know what McClellan and Pope were doing. The Union generals in comparison, never seemed to know what they faced, and even

when they had good information they so mistrusted it that they refused to believe it.

Lee and Jackson were able to make use of maneuver to take advantage of temporary weaknesses in the Union positions. Through the use of speed and surprise, they effectively neutralized the numerical advantage of the North. A similar sustainment disadvantage was negated by the use of Northern supplies, again gained through the speed and surprise of the Confederate forces.

The Confederate leadership also made marvelous use of deception. They capitalized on Union preconceptions and repeatedly moved faster and struck more swiftly than the Union generals thought possible. When it suited their purpose, they allowed Pope to believe that Jackson had only a raiding party in the Federal rear. They also capitalized on the confused communications between Union leaders. In the final analysis, the Southern leadership built on Pope's preconception about what should happen. Having done that, they did the unlikely and impossible, leaving Pope defending against the probable and possible.

Confederate leaders also out-organized their Union opponents. They massed their artillery, centralized their cavalry, and used that cavalry effectively for intelligence collection, raiding, and defense of their flanks. They issued clear, simple orders that were generally understood by their subordinates. That did not mean there was not personal dislike among the leadership. A.P. Hill and Jackson for instance often disagreed violently, and Longstreet had harsh words for Jackson after the Seven Days' Battles, but those personal differences were generally overlooked in an effort to achieve the greater goal. Southern leaders under Lee also made effective use of corps staffs, allowing the

operational commander to focus on the fighting and planning. Finally, they always strove to place decisive forces in Pope's rear. This tactic denied Pope the advantage that Grant would later accrue through the predominance of mass.

In the end, the Army of Northern Virginia overcame friction while the Army of Virginia was overcome by it. Lee used a strategic need to create an operational plan. He had an end state in mind and developed a plan to work toward it. He then used the tactical situation to execute the operational plan and from the operational victory gained strategic advantage.

### IMPLICATIONS

Second Manassas demonstrates that no one element of operational design will suffice to win a campaign. The operational commander must blend all of the elements into a synergistic whole if he is to achieve decisive victory. Viewed in a modern context, we may be asking too much of technology alone. As a matter of fact, over dependence on technology alone may in some ways it may even hinder operational design.

If technology ties us to logistic trains, it will limit our options and give the enemy an unnecessary advantage. If it cannot be employed to enhance operational design, its usefulness is extremely limited. On the other hand though, mass, the strength of our opponent, is useful only if it can be brought to bear in a decisive manner. Second Manassas demonstrates ways that such mass can be degraded or negated.

If Second Manassas has lessons for the modern operational commander, it is that agility, speed, initiative, and depth are as much features of

the commander's mind as they are of the technology or strength of forces. An imaginative leader who is aware of the elements of operational design can form, train, deploy, and maneuver his force in a manner that allows for the defeat of a larger, better supplied enemy.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., May 1986, pp. 14-18.

<sup>2</sup> FM 100-6, Large Unit Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Coordinating Draft, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, September 1987. The structure and explanation for the elements of operational design are taken in whole or part from Chapter 3. Where modified, it is for brevity and clarity. Operational fires are omitted as a design element because they did not come into play until World War II.

<sup>3</sup> James M. McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, Volume II, The Civil War, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1982), pp. 181-188. Actual numbers of combatants during the Civil war are difficult to estimate. Union records enumerate enlistments and must be adjusted to avoid double counting those who reenlisted. Many Confederate records were destroyed, so estimates for that army are generally inaccurate. It can be determined however, that some 2,100,000 men eventually fought for the Union, while 800,000 fought for the Confederacy.

The numbers used in this paper reflect an estimation of strength based on initial enlistments at the beginning of the war. At the time of the Second Manassas Campaign, the South had just initiated conscription while the North would not do so until the following year. Depending on the snapshot taken, actual numbers of enlisted soldiers will vary widely.

Also of note is the fact that the South could place some three-fourths of its available army in the front lines, while the North could manage to do so with only around one-half of its forces. Those qualifiers led to the 5:3 ratio rather than what some might see as a much greater Northern superiority.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent J. Esposito, The West Point Atlas of American Wars, Volume I, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> George F.R. Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, (Abridgement by E.B. Long, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), p. 333.

<sup>6</sup> T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, (New York: Random House, 1952), p.121.

<sup>7</sup> Dennis Kelly, Second Manassas: The Battle and Campaign, (Harrisburg: Eastern Acorn Press, 1983), p.6. Strength figures for units throughout the campaign vary widely. G.F.R. Henderson lists Pope's strength as 47,000 at the same time. In all cases I have chosen the smaller of the available numbers and have concentrated on quoting only one or two sources to attempt to retain relative perspective concerning actual strength relationships.

8 Ibid., p. 6.

9 Joseph P. Cullen, The Peninsula Campaign, 1862, (New York: Bonanza Books, 1983), p. 177.

10 Alexander S. Webb, The Peninsula: McClellan's Campaign of 1862, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881), p. 26. Troop strengths throughout the Civil War varied widely, depending on who's numbers one chose to accept. After the war, McClellan would claim he never had more than 85,000 men available to fight on the peninsula, while his own morning reports from the period listed over 100,000 ready for action. Numbers given here represent the closest average the author can determine, having looked at a number of sources.

11 J.H. Anderson, American Civil War, (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1912), p. 39.

12 Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, p. 145.

13 Theodore F. Dwight, The Virginia Campaign of 1862 Under General Pope, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895), p. 5.

14 Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, p. 356

15 Dwight, The Virginia Campaign of 1862 Under General Pope, pp. 13-14.

16 Kelly, Second Manassas: The Battle and Campaign, p.8.

17 Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, p. 337.

18 McPherson, Ordeal By Fire, p. 191.

19 Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, p. 347.

20 Ibid., p. 349.

21 Kelly, Second Manassas. The Battle and Campaign, p. 12. (In this case, Henderson's estimate of Pope's strength agrees).

22 Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, pp. 350-352.

23 Ibid., p. 356.

24 Ibid., pp. 357-358.

25 Kelly, Second Manassas. The Battle and Campaign, p. 16.

26 Dwight, The Virginia Campaign of 1862 Under General Pope, pp. 80-85

27 Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, p. 392.

28 Dwight, The Virginia Campaign of 1862 Under General Pope, p. 89.

29 Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, p. 396.

30 Cullen, The Peninsula Campaign, 1862, p. 16.

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